

**Highway Department Progress
Under the Administration of
Governor Robert B. Meyner**

974.90
T764
1961k
C.3

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT PROGRESS UNDER THE ADMINISTRATION OF

GOVERNOR ROBERT B. MEYNER

In the fields of Administration, Engineering, Maintenance, Real Estate, and Personnel Management, some rather sweeping changes have resulted in increased production, lower operating costs and the establishment of modern business practices. In our opinion there remains much more to be done.

THE RECORD

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

1. The Department for the first time in its history (July 1, 1956) committed all available funds within the fiscal year. Under previous administrations \$15 to \$18 million was usually uncommitted at the end of the fiscal year.

Engineering programs increased as follows: 1956-57 - \$58,120,000; 1957-58 - \$74,221,000; 1958-59 - \$108,878,000; 1959-60 - \$144,515,000. In reaching this figure the Department has increased production more than 500 per cent. Production was retarded somewhat in both 1959 and 1960 by provisions of Federal contract controls and the difficulty of getting into certain properties in the urban areas of Northern New Jersey. Both of these retarding influences have now been overcome.

MAINTENANCE

1. Installed two-way radio communications on a state-wide basis to improve efficiency and "increase" the work force of maintenance, electrical and equipment activities.

974.90
T764
1961k
C.3

MAINTENANCE (Cont'd)

There are eight base transmitting and receiving stations and 213 mobile units. Mobile installations include maintenance foremen and supervisors' cars, electrical maintenance trucks, equipment and road mechanics' cars and radio maintenance vehicles.

2. Set up a program to eliminate some 10,000 encroachments on state highway rights of way. 3,800 have been removed to date.
3. Winter Driving - The Department has placed special emphasis on snow and ice control. Each year has seen vast improvements in both operational methods and equipment. The total snow fighting force consists of 1423 pieces of equipment and 2,500 men fortified by our state-wide two-way radio network. This enables the forces to be shifted on a moment's notice. In 1958-59 the Department used rock salt on a state-wide basis for the first time in the control of icy pavements. This materially improves the effectiveness of our "Operation Snow" and reduces the annual springtime cost of cleaning abrasives from our roadways. By converting our existing equipment from cinder spreading to salt spreading we were able to avoid purchases of special equipment amounting to many thousands of dollars.

SIGNS

1. Have revised New Jersey's highway sign system and reduced overall number by review under both day and night conditions of signs while providing greater service to motorists through simpler legends, fewer names and larger signs. Placed compass directions

SIGNS (Cont'd)

on route markers to enable motorists to identify travel direction. Established a sign research program and directed a continuing state-wide sign cleaning procedure. Developed more legible and distinctive route markers for State and Federal routes. Established directional sign standards of white reflecting letters on green background. Erected "No Litter" signs on state-wide basis with noticeable lessening of the amount of litter our maintenance people have to pick up.

2. In order to determine the most efficient type of roadside delineators, extensive night tests were conducted on the Whitehead Road section of the Trenton Freeway. These tests made possible for the first time direct comparisons between many types of reflectors.
3. Established a policy to make all signs on state highways either reflecting or illuminated in the interest of greater safety at night.
4. Placed large (six-foot double-faced) SPEED limit signs at five-mile intervals on divided highways to replace smaller signs heretofore placed at one-mile or less intervals, resulting in a savings by making one sign do the work of ten or more smaller ones.

Enforcement authorities, including the State Police, have been enthusiastic in their praise of the large sign.

PLANNING

1. For the first time in its history the State Highway Department developed a comprehensive master plan for future construction.

PLANNING (Cont'd)

This plan was based upon the estimated traffic requirements of 1975 and includes additions to and improvements of the present state system. It includes upwards of \$2 3/4 - 3 billion dollars in construction deemed necessary to the continued growth of New Jersey.

This plan was reviewed with Legislators, Freeholders, Planning Boards and local officials in a series of meetings in each of the 21 counties. The purpose of these visits was to permit coordination by others with the overall planning of the Department. This marked the first time such county visits were undertaken on a state-wide scale.

SAFETY CONSTRUCTION

Accidents have been reduced and lives saved by the introduction of many improvements in design of both new and old highways. Chief among these features are the following:

1. Barrier curbs to eliminate head-on collisions - 70 miles constructed since 1954.
2. Creeper lanes for use by slow-moving vehicles on long, steep grades - 33 built since 1954.
3. Jughandles for left turns - 138 units in the same period.
4. Stabilized and widened shoulders to provide safe off-the-road stops and reduce maintenance costs by eliminating periodic scraping.

SAFETY CONSTRUCTION (Cont'd)

5. Bordering white reflecting lines have been painted on the outer edges of all state highways to delineate the pavement edge at night. New Jersey was the first state to adopt and complete this program.
6. Wire mesh fencing installed on overpasses to prevent children from climbing on balustrades.
7. Constructed 194 overpasses to eliminate grade intersections for pedestrian and vehicular travel.
8. Established a continuing program for closing center island openings to reduce accidents caused by the "overhang" of vehicles.
9. Curves on all new highways being super-elevated (banked) for greater safety.

ADMINISTRATION

1. Established Standard Operating Procedures to insure uniform interpretation of all departmental operations.
2. Established rigid controls covering use and operation of department-owned vehicles. As a result, the private use of state cars was eliminated and through more efficient assignment the passenger car fleet was reduced from 352 to 278.

ADMINISTRATION (Cont'd)

Sixty excess cars were sold and 12 others assigned to other State Departments. Operating expenses of the fleet were reduced by \$4,000 a month.

3. Reviewed and revised standard forms used by the Department (the outgrowth of 35 years), eliminated many and created some new ones which materially reduced inter-office correspondence.
4. Revised former practice of retaining 10% of the bid price of a job until final approval of the completed job to retention of 10% through the first half of job and no retention thereafter. This in no way reduces the state's protection, but results in tying up less of the contractor's working capital.
5. Established perpetual inventories and placed stock orders on a quarterly rather than yearly basis, reducing required storage space and the tied-up funds.
6. Instituted progress boards to replace written reports from construction and real estate divisions. Photos of these boards are sent to the staff at 2-week intervals. Information relative to construction progress is thereby placed at their disposal on one sheet rather than with volumes. In addition to main control boards in administration headquarters, specialized boards are used in the road, bridge, planning, real estate, legal, and personnel divisions.

ADMINISTRATION (Cont'd)

7. The Commissioner was designated as the Governor's liaison with all authorities: Port of New York, New Jersey Turnpike, New Jersey Highway, Memorial Bridge Commission, Delaware River Port, Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission, Metropolitan Transit Commission, Palisade Interstate Parkway.
8. When the Port of New York Authority unveiled its plans for double-decking the George Washington Bridge, an agreement was obtained whereby the Authority would pay \$24,000,000 - the state's share (40%) of a proposed freeway extending westward across Bergen County from the bridge. In 1956 the Federal Highway Act provided for a 90-10 division of costs on interstate routes between the State and Federal Governments. However, the Port Authority was induced not only to abide by its original agreement to pay \$24,000,000 but also another \$1,000,000 as well. It is understood that any surpluses will be used on other Bergen County highways feeding the bridge. By this means the state will be able to obtain \$30,000,000 in other highway construction in addition to the financing in Bergen County of the Bergen-Passaic Freeway.
9. The Commissioner acted as Flood Coordinator during the devastating floods of August 1955. In this capacity he coordinated the emergency relief work of all public agencies, both State and Federal.

10. Established uniform observance of hours for beginning and ending the working day by sounding a gong signal. This practice has done away with people using their own determination of the working day.
11. Records Disposal - In the interest of efficient conservation of storage space, procedure was set up for the disposal of useless and obsolete records in conformity with state regulations. In a single month seven tons of such records were disposed of and the space released utilized to overcome office crowding.
12. Produced first organization charts of the Department showing the responsibility and necessary personnel of all divisions, bureaus, and sections of the Department.
13. Established policy of staff meetings.
14. Instituted a policy of investigation and preferring charges toward the immediate release of dishonest employees. Quite a number have been separated from their jobs.
15. Adopted policy of painting all state highway cars a bright yellow making them conspicuous and discouraging their use on personal jaunts.
16. To meet the demand for experienced contractors, the Department revised tests and pre-qualification ratings, placing greater emphasis upon past performance. By up-grading this element of "pre-qualification" the Department was able to cash in not only on a contractor's ability and character performance, but his adherence to meeting a contract schedule.

FERNWOOD EQUIPMENT DEPOT

1. The Fernwood Plant was added to and reorganized to obtain more effective layout and efficient operation. Reassignment of space resulted in less crowding and storing of more equipment under cover.
2. Plant security was increased through additional yard lighting; continuous watch service signaling system for fires; new fencing and restriction of certain areas. Modernization of the plant is continuing.
3. A 20-year accumulation of junk was sold and rigid procedures established in the disposal and classification of scrap.
4. A survey was conducted to remove obsolete materials and parts dating back to World War I. Following an inventory, they were offered for sale under competitive bids. Unsold material was scrapped. This procedure was extended to include parts stocked in field depots and in the Electrical Bureau.

PERSONNEL

1. Established a departmental dispensary and two first-aid rooms for use by employees.

An average of 300 persons a month receive treatments for ailments ranging from minor indispositions to major accidents. Prior to the establishment of the dispensary under the full-time supervision of a registered nurse, these people received no treatments with the result that excessive absence from work was common.

PERSONNEL (Cont'd)

2. Instituted a "tapering-off" retirement policy by which administration of various bureaus and divisions was gradually turned over to assistants over a two-year period and assistants were elevated to the position of acting chief.
3. Established a broad training program for new employees and others to better qualify them for their present jobs and future advancement.
4. Abolished the practice of employees receiving gifts and entertainment from purveyors of services and supplies.
5. Eliminated all references to race and color on Personnel Forms and established non-discriminatory employment practice. This policy resulted in the appointment of a Negro as head of the Electrical Division solely on merit since we do not discriminate either for or against any man or woman on the basis of race, creed, or color.
6. Abolished the issuance to and the use of railroad passes among all employees.
7. Up-graded employees commensurate with duties performed as Civil Service regulations will permit.
8. In 1954 a recruitment program was instituted. Under this program representatives of the Department visited the campuses of leading colleges and universities to interest engineering graduates in careers in the Highway Department. This program, carried on in direct competition with private industry, has been unusually successful and has placed in

PERSONNEL (Cont'd)

state service many well qualified young men. The Highway Department was the first department of state government to engage in a program of this character.

9. In order to run down irregularities and violations of proper conduct of major importance an investigator of long experience was added to the staff. This man's duties are such as to reduce infractions of the Department's regulations.
10. Office Christmas Parties were abolished because of the unfavorable reactions on the part of many of our people and the general public. In their stead, a Children's Christmas Party was instituted.
11. There has been progressive improvement in bettering the wage scales of our three grades of hourly employees: Laborers, Semi-skilled and Skilled workers.

At the outset of this administration the laborer had a \$1.26 minimum hourly wage. It required five years of service, receiving one 6¢ increment each year, to reach a \$1.56 maximum hourly wage. The same type of employee now enters with a \$1.57 minimum hourly wage and three years later reaches his maximum of \$1.78, and effective December 29, 1958 he will enter at \$1.64 per hour with a maximum of \$1.96 in four years.

The Semi-skilled range has been boosted from a \$1.32 minimum and \$1.62 maximum, to a \$1.69 minimum and \$1.90 maximum. An employee also reaches his maximum in three years instead of five years. On December 29, 1958 the new ranges will be \$1.73 to \$2.09 in four years.

PERSONNEL (Cont'd)

Skilled employees can now, in three years instead of five, go from their present \$2.02 minimum to a \$2.29 maximum. In 1954 the starting pay in the same category was \$1.74 and the worker could only aspire to a \$2.04 maximum -- which is just 2¢ an hour more than the present minimum wage paid these people. On December 29, 1958 the new rate will be \$2.00 to \$2.54 in four years.

12. Established a uniform practice of compulsory retirement at the age of 70.

REAL ESTATE

1. On Interstate construction established a policy of using Title Companies to clear titles, rather than enlarge the Department's own title bureau. By using these specialists the property owner can get a much quicker settlement than would otherwise be the case -- frequently within a week.

MEETINGS WITH PROPERTY OWNERS

1. Established a practice of holding meetings in various municipalities to explain the Department's policy and procedures in the acquisition of rights-of-way. At these meetings property owners are provided with answers to practically all of their questions.
2. Created a plan to ease the financial stress of property owners forced to relocate their homes. Under this plan a property owner is paid 25% of the purchase price upon signing an agreement of sale providing that amount does not exceed 75% of his equity. By this means, a property owner is provided cash to aid him in acquiring a new home or place of business.

EXCESS LAND PARCELS

1. A regular routine has been set up for clearing 35 years' accumulation of irregular shaped pieces of land adjoining highway rights-of-way as well as surplus parcels not needed for highway purposes and putting them back on the public tax rolls.

Nearly 200 such parcels were disposed of at a public sale held last December. In June, 1958 a second sale was held. No parcels in which other state departments or municipalities wished to acquire were auctioned. More such sales are planned.

SAFETY

1. Expanded Department's safety program to include inspection of construction projects to safeguard motoring public. Includes advance warning signs, barricades, lights, uniformed traffic directors and similar safeguards.

GENERAL

1. Appointed by Governor Meyner as member of Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission in 1955. Headed investigation that resulted in uncovering evidence of widespread irregularities in the conduct of the Commission's affairs, corrected these and reorganized the operations of the Commission with the result that budgets were reduced, bond retirements were accelerated and service to motorists improved.

RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION

In late 1958 Governor Robert B. Meyner requested the State Highway Commissioner to study New Jersey's commuter problem and make recommendations toward its solution. Early in 1959 steps were taken to avoid a chaotic situation which was anticipated would exist if the Supreme Court determined to permit the West Shore R.R. to cease operation of the Weehawken Ferries. (The Court did so order and on March 25, 1959 ferry operations ceased.) "On the spot" exhaustive personal studies and the cooperative effort of our bus services made possible the limiting to 310 persons out of the customary 4,000 arrivals at Weehawken; of these approximately 60% rode on railroad passes. Through prior arrangements bus companies provided transportation for the balance.

Spurred by this experience and other impending cutbacks in rail transportation, legislation creating a Division of Railroad Transportation within the State Highway Department was enacted on March 4, 1959. Since the formation of this Division extensive studies have been conducted into all phases of the commuter problem. A program was submitted to the electorate on November 3, 1959. The source of revenue suggested to execute the program was defeated. The Division proceeded to develop another proposal and in April, 1960 released a report containing suggestions for immediate remedial action and long-range proposals. This has met with wide public acclaim.

It might be interesting to quote an excerpt from the Commissioner's address of March 18, 1959 to the Association of Highway Officials of the North Atlantic States.

"And now before relinquishing the rostrum to others permit me to touch upon just one other aspect of transportation that may sometime in the near future be placed under certain of the Highway Departments represented here today. I refer to the transporting of people rather than the movement of vehicles -- the commuter problem if you will, or the question of mass transportation.

"As you know this is a matter of growing concern in all states which have concentrated metropolitan areas, particularly those states adjacent to New York City.

"It is interesting to note that Governor Meyner of New Jersey signed a bill on March 12 creating a Division of Railroad Transportation under the State Highway Department. Because of the Governor's great interest in the commuter problem I have devoted much time to meetings with railroads, bus lines, various official bodies and a score or more of so-called experts as well as with our sister state, New York.

"Progress is being made. However, this is not a job for legerdemain or 'rabbit out of the hat' stunts. It's a long, careful and cooperative job. We need mass transportation and the problem of railroad deficits is a real one. We hope to be able to circumvent grandiose schemes for the present in favor of shorter term practical methods. It is our belief that it is better to save the patient's life before we try to rehabilitate him. Some steps in this direction have already been accomplished through the cooperation of the Public Utilities Commission's action in eliminating certain schedules."